

Festa Intenazionale della Storia. Un proyecto de difusión de la historia y del patrimonio

The International Festival of History. A concrete project for the dissemination of history and heritage

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Recepción del artículo: 16-05-2014. Aceptación de su publicación: 15-06-2014

RESUMEN. En este trabajo se presentan una serie de proyectos educativos y nuevos retos y perspectivas que la ciudad de Bolonia ha llevado a cabo en los últimos años con respecto a la enseñanza de la historia y la educación patrimonial. Nos parece que el mejor lugar para comenzar es con la propia ciudad, el espacio urbano, un lugar de encuentro de historia e historias. Y nos gustaría empezar haciendo una pregunta: ¿puede el patrimonio histórico y cultural actuar como una herramienta para compensar las lagunas, las deficiencias y la sensación de pérdida que afecta y define la sociedad en que la vivimos? Y esta a su vez nos lleva a otra pregunta: ¿qué herramientas y que las metodologías podemos utilizar?

Cada vez que empezamos un nuevo curso de Historia Medieval o Metodologías de Didáctica de la Historia la mayoría de los estudiantes nos dicen que no les gusta la historia. Y nos pasamos la mitad del curso explicando por qué es importante estudiar y enseñar historia. Porque la historia no es el mero libro de texto, o una secuencia de fechas, guerras, batallas. Sino que la a historia es nosotros, nosotros somos historia.

Por estas razones, un grupo de colegas de la Universidad de Bolonia se reunió y creó la “Fiesta de la Historia”, no un “festival”, sino una “Fiesta”, alimentada por la participación principalmente local. La Fiesta es ampliamente reconocida como uno de los más importantes acontecimientos en Europa.

ABSTRACT. In this paper we present a series of educational projects and new challenges and perspectives that the city of Bologna has undertaken in the last few years regarding the teaching of history and heritage education. It seems to us that the best place to begin is with the city itself, the urban space, a meeting place of history and stories. And we would like to start by asking a question: can historical and cultural heritage act as a tool to compensate for the gaps, shortcomings, and the sense of loss which afflict and define the society in which we live? And this in turn leads us to another question: which tools and which methodologies can we use?

Every time when we start a new course of Medieval History or Methodologies of teaching history most of the students tell us that they don't like history. And we spend half of the time of the course explaining why it is important to study and to teach history. Because history is not the merely textbook, or a sequence of dates, wars, battles. But history is us, we are history.

For these reasons, a group of colleagues of the University of Bologna got together and created the “Festival of the History”, not a “festival” but a “Festival”, fed by mainly local participation. The Festival is widely recognized as one of the most important events in Europe.

PALABRAS CLAVE: historia, patrimonio, roots, educación, enseñanza

KEYWORDS: history, heritage, roots, education, teaching

The roots for flying: the protagonists of the history. Some reflections on history

Cities identify with their monuments and works of art of universal value because these provoke emotion, memories and pleasure. The city is the setting, the basic nucleus for human interaction: a place of participation, innovation, education and culture. A rich, pluralistic, collective heritage which belongs to us all.

The city we see - when we manage to catch sight of it, when we pay a particular attention which goes beyond the absent-minded looks due to the frenetic rhythm of modern life - is the overall result of the interaction with a collectivity in the course of time. We therefore understand the importance of taking a look at that history which passes next to us every day.

Educating to the beauty means educating to this immense heritage which belongs to us in the present, since in those traces we read the thought of the people who preceded us, and the community they were part of.

Road and natural crossroads, meeting point between Mediterranean and mid-European world, culture and sciences irradiation and attraction point, like all others, Bolognese community boasts an heritage of "stories", a gallery of figures, a number of episodes which can be referred to, in order to understand its mentality and attitudes, partly irremediably lost and partly converged to shape current conditions and behaviours.

The chronological range of the historical heritage of the centre and territory of Bologna is particularly wide, and allows to stretch back from the present to the palaeolithic period, through unique continuity of legacies and imprints, often held and valorized in museums which are in the lead of goods' valorization, exhibition and reference capacities.

The city of Bologna has become one of the most important cultural and tourist attractions regarding history, and the importance of the Festival is demonstrated by the fact that its patrons are the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, and the European Commission Representation in Italy.

The projects are organized by the International Centre of History Methodology and Heritage (DiPaSt)¹ of the Education Department, with the Department of History and Anthropology and Geography, together with local organizations and schools.

An important project which is carried out throughout the year and provides important underpinning for the "International Festival of the History" is called "The roots for flying: the protagonists of history", which combines research and history teaching carried out by teachers and students on any topic they choose to investigate.

An ancient Canadian Indian proverb says that parents must give their children both roots and wings.

Is it acceptable that the roots could be used to fly? And what does it mean: what are the connections with history and its teaching?

The metaphors we use are often excessive or they oversimplify, but in this case the expression is really appropriate.

Today globalization and migration make it necessary to redefine the idea of citizenship and recognize that we are all part of one humanity and one planet.

The roots for flying means to understand, to create, to be as far as possible an agent of our own future, and to learn that each person is like a stratification, a sedimentation of knowledge and active participants of collective events of history.

Each school adopts a particular monument or a topic such as canals, roads, towers or churches. Then, at the end of the school year, students are brought together in a prominent public building and exchange the knowledge they have acquired.

¹ The Centre DiPaSt is a meeting - place for the study and teaching of history and cultural heritage. In particular, it aims to encourage the sharing of terminology, methods, practices and tools used in various places and countries. The Centre collects and utilizes the wide range of experience, research, projects and activities that have taken place during recent years at a national and international level in the teaching of history and cultural heritage and in different sectors as archives, libraries, museums, art galleries and other relevant cultural institutions.

They have the possibility to present the results of their research in front of a commission of experts and administrators and put forward their ideas for the care and safeguarding of the cultural asset they have studied.

Following an evaluation by the commission the respective schools are awarded the symbolic custody of the asset. In this way a forum is opened between students, citizens and administrators regarding work for safeguarding the city's heritage creating a shared cultural resource.

All the materials produced will be archive it and preserved in one of the most important library in Bologna (the "Salaborsa"). So, we have built an archive of educational projects.

This project aims to encourage

a) the creation of a permanent network which brings together cultural and human resources that are present in the city and hinterland;

b) access to archives, museums, libraries, research centres, and cultural bodies;

c) the possibility to consult scholars and experts;

d) the display of results in special conferences, exhibitions and paper and multimedia publications.

Opportunities are created for contact and collaboration between various centres and individuals involved in research, training and culture. It is hoped that it will encourage students and citizens to appreciate the value of having knowledge about the past in order to really understand the present and plan for the future. At the same time it helps reinforce the sense of civic solidarity which we can see in a few minutes in the project "From hand to hand", a human chain for San Luca and forge new links between culture and the local economy, commerce and tourism.

Hand to hand: Passamano per san Luca

The initiative first began in 2002 with the first "From hand to hand - Passamano per San Luca" which, roughly translated, means "a human chain for san Luca", which recreates an example of civic solidarity which occurred in 1677.

San Luca is an important church on a hill just outside the city of Bologna. Perhaps you may not know that Bologna is renowned for the fact that it has 38 kilometres of arcades which protect the pavements of the streets.

In 1677 a special arcade was built to link the city to the hill top church: a distance of nearly 3 kilometres. You can imagine this was a difficult enterprise and the help of the whole town was needed.

A long human chain passed the building materials needed to construct the great arcade from hand to hand. In our reconstruction, citizens, children, students, associations, all, pass the flags of the world from hand to hand which are hoisted in front of the church of Saint Luca.

This modern human chain has received prizes from two Italian presidents, and represents the climax of the week when students and citizens line the great arcade which leads to the church of San Luca re-evoking memories of that first human chain and reminding us of the importance of solidarity between peoples.

The celebration of the Festival begins here.

We are history. The future for history and history for the future

This might appear like a slogan, pre-packaged words to be used in any situation. But we believe that helping our students perceive and understand the dimension of history in our reality is the most interesting journey we can undertake with them, especially if we want to legitimise memory and consolidate the past in the present, as part of our everyday lives.

Above all, we ourselves are historical sources, with our memories, our own past. We are the result of influences that have been inherited from the sedimentation and stratification of centuries and millennia as well as influences from the contemporary world.

Traces of the past can be seen in our faces, in our bodies and in our thoughts. Material culture, the process of evolution and changes in the way in which human beings interact with the natural environment, are visible in us all. And we all have the right to know and cultivate our own history in the face of a society diminished by the imposition of consumer culture.

But why do we need to plead for a future for history? Because history risks reaching its end and not because of well-known recurring apocalyptic visions. The human occupation of this beautiful planet represents only the smallest speck of the past and if we fail to resolve the pressing environmental problems that face us, then history will disappear along with the rest of humanity, while the earth will continue to exist far into the future. We are like history because our personal affairs do not begin with our birth but much before.

To recognize and appreciate our cultural and artistic heritage that has been entrusted to us is a

duty for countries like ours which the UNESCO recognises has an incomparable heritage. The codes are eloquent if one is able to read them.

The city opens itself up to us, like a flower, when we manage to pay just a little more attention in frenetic daily existence.

A good education involves creating awareness of this immense cultural heritage which belongs to the present because in these traces of the past we read the thoughts of those people who came before us, and we can see the products of their societies. To educate in this way is to motivate students to seek out the knowledge which will help them to have a clearer idea about who they are, which leads me to our main focus.

The details of the International Festival of the History

What does this “Festival” consist of?

The idea of holding a festival to celebrate history may seem rather strange, it might appear to be yet another example of the fashion for cities to pick on an exclusive theme to attract attention from the outside world. Our Festival has nothing to do with this: the “International Festival of History” has been held in Bologna for the last eight years and is based on an ever increasing supply of research,

teaching and collaboration with universities, schools and cultural bodies, working together in a network.

The Festival consists of meetings, conferences, exhibitions, and displays which are mainly held during one week in October in various locations: palaces, squares, streets, churches, cloisters, theatres and school and administrative buildings. It deals with many of the most highly debated topics in historiography: the roots and origins of the present, unresolved enigmas, the legacy, the mysteries, the premises and perspectives of these questions linked to the environment, the economy, human relationships, and communications. There are no boundaries, no limits. The topics and themes reflect our everyday lives and those of our ancestors here and all over the world: music, food, sport, fashion, art, religion, politics, and technology.

The wealth of history is the food made history, art made history, sport made history, the music made history, everything surrounding us made history.

Bologna becomes a type of theatre offering a series of cultural initiatives. However, the heart of the Festival is the direct involvement of students of all



Fig 1. 2014 Festival Brochure of the International Festival of the History

ages from schools and the university. They can attend meetings and conferences with experts of international fame who provide information about the results of their research. In this way it is more than a simple collection of events, but the real Festival in the true sense of the word because we see so many elements of the city participating together in this meeting of local and universal history increasing respect for historical heritage and awareness of the main issues of the moment. This year will be the eighth year. In the last edition over three hundred events were held in a week.

The International Festival of History represents the most recent confluence of all these initiatives that were carried out during the previous year with teachers and students.

The International Award “The golden arcades-Jacques le Goff”

History is always at risk from distortion and exploitation, which undermine knowledge. Nowadays literary journalism and cinema often speculate on the fascination that history holds for the public which often results in inaccurate, deformed and manipulated visions of history for commercial ends. With the growing use of new technologies it

has become much easier to disseminate erroneous convictions and knowledge. This makes every initiative that encourages correctness and dissemination much more important.

This is the reason why the Festival includes a prize “The golden arcades-Jacques Le Goff”, which sets out to reward individuals and work which are dedicated to accuracy and efficient dissemination in the teaching of history.

The first year we had the honour of awarding the prize to Jacques Le Goff the 9th October in Paris. It was a wonderful experience. The second year to Giovanni Minoli, Italian TV journalist, in 2010 to Alberto Angela, Italian historian and archaeologist, in 2011 to Peter Denley, co-founder of

History and computing, of the Queen Mary University of London, in 2012 to Alessandro Barbero, and in 2013 to Franco Cardini, both famous historians of the Middle Ages.

The Festival is an international project. In fact, since 2010 the Festival also took place in Spain, in Jaén and Baeza.

Conclusions

The many projects which have been carried out over these 10 years by teachers and students who



Fig 2. 2014 Festival Brochure of the International Festival of the History

have participated on initiatives such as “the human chain” and “the roots for flying” show that the school is a place which offers great possibilities; a place in which objective criticism of everyday reality can begin; a place in which we can learn to preserve the memory of what we have been, before this is forgotten forever.

Knowledge is created through active participation on the part of students and this participation takes place both in schools and in the mind. Interest in history is a type of interest that should be encouraged by teachers who set a challenge for their students. This challenge enables them to become key players in interpreting the past, rather than mere passive containers of indisputable truths. In order for students to become the true authors of their learning it is necessary to involve them in the exploration of this world in which they are immersed. The research activities and teaching projects which have been illustrated above are a significant testimony to this.

The International Festival of the History is the happy result of a network of individuals who have worked to bring things together.

In no way can it be described as ephemeral or extemporary rather it relaunches and confirms the role of Bologna as a centre for the elaboration and spread of culture. To summarise, these 10 years of activity have demonstrated how it is possible to organise a broad range of original cultural events which are not limited to merely exploiting human resources and historical artistic locations but open up to a broad horizon. Because of these activities, Bologna can call itself “the city of history”.

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Fig 3-4. Parliaments of students